

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07

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FM AMCONSUL PORT MORESBY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 671

INFO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: PINT, PP

SUBJECT: BOUGAINVILLE SECESSION THREAT

REF: A. PORT MORESBY A-36, DEC. 5, 1974

B. PORT MORESBY 414 DEC. 1974

C. PORT MORESBY 420 DEC. DEC 1974

D. PORT MORESBY 443 DEC. 1974

1. UNDERLYING HISTORICAL AND EMOTIONAL ISSUES PROMPTING SOME BOUGAINVILLE LEADERS TO SEEK AUTONOMY OR SECESSION WERE SUMMARIZED IN REFAIR. FOLLOWING DECEMBER 74 MINE ROYALTIES SETTLEMENT (SEE REFTELS) PNG-BOUGAINVILLE RELATIONS REMAINED CALM FOR FOUR MONTHS. HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY CONTINUED TO DEBATE THE DIVISION OF POWERS BETWEEN THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT AND THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS. FATHER JOHN MOMIS, MHA FROM BOUGAINVILLE AND JOHN KAPUTIN, MHA FROM EAST NEW BRITAIN, BOTH LEADERS OF NATIONAL PRESSURE GROUP (NPG) CONTINUED TO PRESS SOMARE GOVT TO ENTRENCH PROVINCIAL GOVT REGIME AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEFINE ITS POWERS, FUNCTIONS, AND SOURCES OF REVENUE IN

CONSTITUTION.

2. BY MID MARCH, OPPOSITION (INCLUDING NPG) FORCED SOMARE GOVT TO ENTRENCH IN DRAFT CONSTITUTION CONCEPT OF PROVINCIAL GOVT REGIME AND TO MAKE STATEMENT THAT FUNCTIONS, POWERS, ETC., WOULD BE STIPULATED IN ORGANIC LAWS. NEVERTHELESS THE PNG CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY HAS NOT YET PASSED CHAPTER 10 OF THE CONSTITUTION ON PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT, NO SPECIFIC POWERS HAVE BEEN YET GRANTED TO THE BOUGAINVILLE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT, AND ORGANIC LAWS SPECIFYING SUCH POWERS HAS NOT EMERGED DESPITE COMING OF INDEPENDENCE IN TWO MONTHS. STILL ON APRIL 30 PRESS REPORTED LEO HANNETT STATEMENT THAT PROVISIONAL GOVT APPEARED MEET BOUGAINVILLE NEEDS: "THERE IS NO INTENTION TO BECOME A SEPARATE NATION AT THIS TIME."

3. REVERSAL THIS ATTITUDE OCCURRED BETWEEN MAY 7 WHEN BOUGAINVILLE THREATENED TO BOYCOTT PNG INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS BECAUSE OF DELAY IN RECEIVING WORKS BUDGET FUNDS FROM NATIONAL GOVT, AND MAY 16 WHEN BOUGAINVILLE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY THREATENED TO SECEDE IN ANGRY REACTION TO DECISION MADE BY NATIONAL GOVT TO PROVIDE ONLY 1.3 MILLION OF 5.3 MILLION WORKS BUDGET REQUESTED.

4. DURING WEEK PRIOR THIS ANNOUNCEMENT "LABOR RIOT" OCCURRED AT BOUGAINVILLE COPPER MINE, AND WHILE INCIDENT WAS TOTALLY UNRELATED TO PROVINCIAL GOVT BUDGET OR POWERS DISPUTE, FORCEFUL SUPPRESSION OF RIOT BY CENTRAL GOVT AND "HARD LINE" STATEMENTS BY MINISTER OF POLICE MAY HAVE SOURED BOUGAINVILLIANS.

5. IN ANY EVENT BOUGAINVILLE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY VOTED (219 TO 11) ON MAY 30 TO SECEDE FROM PNG (WITHOUT HOWEVER NAMING EFFECTIVE DATE OF SECESSION). ASSEMBLY CITED WORKS PROGRAM AND LACK OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND POLITICAL POWERS IN CONSTITUTION AS CAUSE FOR VOTE. SIR PAUL LAPUN AND MHA DONATUS MOLA (BOTH BOUGAINVILLIANS IN SOMARE CABINET) BOTH GIVEN VOTE OF "NO-CONFIDENCE" BY BOUGAINVILLE ASSEMBLY FOR NOT SUPPORTING BOUGAINVILLE'S NEEDS.

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6. IN MEETINGS HELD JUNE 11-12 BETWEEN BOUGAINVILLE AND NATIONAL REPS AT MORESBY, LEO HANNETT STATED SECESSION WAS A "NON-NEGOTIABLE" ISSUE AND DEMANDED, AMONG OTHER THINGS, A\$150 MILLION FROM CENTRAL GOVT TO ESTABLISH INDEPENDENT BOUGAINVILLE.

7. NEGOTIATIONS BROKE DOWN IMMEDIATELY, BUT DR. ALEXIS

SAREI, WHO WEARS TWO HATS, THAT OF DISTRICT COMMISSIONER OF BOUGAINVILLE AND THAT OF CHAIRMAN OF BOUGAINVILLE PROVINCIAL GOVT, STATED THAT CRISES COULD BE AVERTED IF CENTRAL GOVERNMENT GUARANTEED RESPECT FOR MINORITY GROUPS (READ PROVINCIAL GOVT POWERS) AND MADE LONG TERM FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS FOR BOUGAINVILLE. HANNETT IN FOLLOW UP INTERVIEW STATED "IT IS NOT JUST A MATTER OF MONEY. WE HAVE STUDIED THE CONSTITUTION AND IT LOOKS PRETTY HOPELESS."

8. SOMARE, AFTER A COOLING OFF PERIOD, STATED ON JUNE 17 THAT "NATIONAL UNITY IS ALSO NON-NEGOTIABLE. NATIONAL UNITY IS SOMETHING THAT NO GROUP CAN VIOLATE OR BE ALLOWED TO DISCARD OR DESTROY JUST BECAUSE IT SUITS ITS UNPRINCIPLED SELFISH POLITICAL DESIRE."

9. FROM JUNE 17 TO PRESENT DEBATE HAS FOCUSED ON WHETHER PEOPLE OF BOUGAINVILLE ACTUALLY DESIRE SECESSION, WITH THE BOUGAINVILLE PROVINCIAL ASSEMBLY STARTING A NORTH-SOUTH TOUR OF THE ISLAND TO DRUM UP SUPPORT FOR SECESSION. UNOPPOSED BY NATIONAL GOVERNMENT SPOKESMEN ON THE SCENE, THE BPG WAS EVIDENTLY GENERALLY SUCCESSFUL IN GETTING SUPPORT FROM MOST AREAS OF CENTRAL AND SOUTH BOUGAINVILLE WITH ONLY SMALL GROUPS IN THE NORTH WITNESSING FOR THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT.

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FM AMCONSUL PORT MORESBY

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10. THE SOMARE GOVT REMAINED PASSIVE IN THE FACE OF THESE DEVELOPMENTS AS LATE AS JUNE 24 THE CHIEF MINISTER STATED HE WAS AN "OPTIMIST" AND BELIEVED BOUGAINVILLE WOULD STAY IN PNG. "FOR THIS REASON NO SPECIAL PLANS HAVE BEEN MADE." HE NEVERTHELESS DID DISPATCH A TEAM TO BOUGAINVILLE LED BY JUSTICE MINISTER OLEWALE TO PRESENT THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S CASE DIRECTLY TO THE PEOPLE, AND INDICATED THAT THE PUBLIC SERVICE BOARD WAS REVIEWING WHETHER DR. SAREI SHOULD CONTINUE AS BOUGAINVILLE'S DISTRICT COMMISSIONER.

11. THE CHIEF MINISTER THEN DEPARTED FOR THE PACIFIC FORUM ON JUNE 28.

12. BY JULY 7TH FINANCE MINISTER CHAN INDICATED THAT NEGOTIATIONS MUST COMMENCE BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS, WITHIN TWO WEEKS, WITH SECESSION PLANS DROPPED, OR FUNDS WOULD BE PROVIDED DIRECTLY TO THE LOCAL COUNCILS, BYPASSING THE PROVINCIAL GOVT. HE ALSO STATED THAT THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT BELIEVED THAT THE PEOPLE OF BOUGAINVILLE SHOULD RECEIVE MORE IN THE WAY OF LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURES THAN OTHERS IN PNG IN RECOGNITION OF THE CONTRIBUTION BOUGAINVILLE MAKES TO THE NATION.

13. THE GOVERNMENT TEAM DID NOT MEET WITH SUCCESS IN GAINING WIDESPREAD SUPPORT FOR THE NATIONAL GOVT. BY JULY 7 THE PRESS INDICATED THAT NORTH BOUGAINVILLE WAS STILL UNDECIDED, BUT THAT CENTRAL AND SOUTHERN BOUGAINVILLE EVIDENTLY SUPPORTED SECESSION.

14. BUT THE GOVT TEAM MAY HAVE HELPED HOWEVER TO DEFUSE THE SITUATION. THE BP GOVT DID NOT SET A SECESSION DATE ON JULY 8 AS IT HAD PREVIOUSLY THREATENED TO DO, AND ALTHOUGH THE QUESTION IS TO BE RAISED ON THE 15TH THE DEPARTURE OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT ASSEMBLY, DR. ALEXIS SAREI ON A SIX WEEK VACATION TO THE U.S. MAY AFFECT THE OUTCOME. THE PROBABLE NEW CHAIRMAN IS ALLEGED TO BE MORE SUSCEPTIBLE TO A NEGOTIATED POSITION.

15. MINISTER FOR JUSTICE OLEWALE ON HIS RETURN MORESBY ON JULY 10 STATED NEW DEVELOPMENTS SHOWED PROMISE BECAUSE BOUGAINVILLE'S LEADERS HAD NOW SHOWN A WILLINGNESS TO AMICABLY DISCUSS THE ISSUES AT STAKE, AND RADIO

REPORT OF SAME DATE SAID DISCUSSIONS WOULD SHORTLY BE
HELD TO SET DATE AND VENUE OF MEETING.

COMMENT: CERTAIN ASPECTS WHICH CONTRIBUTED TO THIS CRISIS
WILL BE PRESENT IN FUTURE BOUGAINVILLE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT
RELATIONS IF NOT MODIFIED. THE MORE IMPORTANT ARE:

(1) THE SOMARE GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP SEES THE VIRTUE
OF GIVING SOME FORM OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT PER SE, TO
BOUGAINVILLE TO AVOID SECESSION, BUT DOES NOT WISH, AND
IS PROBABLY NOT CAPABLE AT THIS TIME, OF FACING THE
MULTITUDE OF FINANCIAL, ADMINISTRATIVE, AND
POLITICAL PROBLEMS WHICH THE WIDESPREAD IMPLEMENTATION
OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT IN OTHER AREAS OF PNG WOULD
BRING. DESPITE THE LONG DEBATE ON THE ISSUE, FEW
OUTSIDE OF THE GOVERNMENT HAVE FOCUSED ON THE PRACTICAL
ISSUES OF HOW SUCH ENTITIES ARE TO BE STAFFED (GIVEN
THE PAUCITY OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND MANAGEMENT CADRES
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IN PNG), AND HOW THEY ARE TO BE FINANCED. RATHER THAN
AID LOCAL DEVELOPMENT, THE FUNNELINGS OF THESE PRECIOUS
ASSETS TO ESTABLISH PROVINCIAL REGIMES, COULD ACTUALLY
REDUCE AMOUNTS GOING INTO DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. THE
GOVT FEARS THAT CONCESSIONS GIVEN TO BOUGAINVILLE WILL
BECOME THE MODEL FOR CHAPTER 10 OF THE CONSTITUTION,
AND HAS CONSEQUENTLY RESISTED TRANSFER OF REAL POWERS
TO THE NEW REGIME. WHILE IT RECOGNIZES THAT BOUGAINVILLE
MUST RECEIVE A LARGER SHARE OF DEVELOPMENT FUNDS, THE
SOMARE GOVT IS ALSO STRONGLY COMMITTED EMOTIONALLY (AND
IN THE EIGHT POINT PLAN) TO AN EQUITABLE PACE OF DEVELOP-
MENT FOR ALL DISTRICTS.

LASTLY THE LEADERSHIP ON THE NATIONAL LEVEL IS FACED WITH
A MULTITUDE OF PROBLEMS, AND UNTIL BACKED AGAINST THE
WALL, IS FORCED TO LET SOME PROBLEMS "BLOW THEMSELVES
OUT- AND TO STONEWALL THEM UNTIL THEY DO.

(2) THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT LEADERSHIP IS FACED WITH
THE FACT OF PNG INDEPENDENCE WITHIN TWO MONTHS, AND
STILL DOES NOT HAVE THE POWERS IT DESIRES. THERE SEEM
TO BE VARYING RESPONSES TO THIS SITUATION BY THE KEY LEADERS.

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(A) FATHER JOHN MOMIS, STATED AS LATE AS JULY 10 THAT HE DOES NOT WISH BOUGAINVILLE TO SPLIT FROM PNG. HE RATHER VIEWS THE PROBLEM FROM THE NATIONAL LEVEL, AND IS USING THE THREAT OF BOUGAINVILLE SECESSION TO BLUDGEON THE SOMARE GOVERNMENT INTO A PROGRAM OF DECENTRALIZATION OF POWERS. HE WISHES TO SEE THE COLONIAL LEGACY OF HIGHLY CENTRALIZED GOVERNMENT DISMANTLED. HE, IN CONTRAST TO LEO HANNETT, VIEWS POWER AS A MEANS TO EFFECT CHANGE AND DOES NOT SEEK IT PRIMARILY FOR HIS PERSONAL AGGRANDISEMENT. HE IS MOTIVATED BY A VISION OF PNG DEMOCRACY THAT IS PROBABLY NOT PRACTICABLE AT THIS TIME. (B) LEO HANNETT IS AN AMBITIOUS, INTELLIGENT AND EFFECTIVE LOCAL LEADER IN BOUGAINVILLE, AND IT IS WIDELY ASSUMED THAT HE WILL BE THE FIRST PREMIER OF BOUGAINVILLE'S PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT. HE IS INTERESTED IN ACQUIRING BROAD POWERS FOR BOUGAINVILLE'S PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT PRIMARILY TO DEVELOP BOUGAINVILLE AND HIS OWN POWER BASE THERE. UNLIKE MOMIS, WITH WHOM HE IS CLOSE, HIS PRIMARY OBJECTIVES ARE AT THE LOCAL SCENE, AND AFFECT HIM MORE PERSONALLY. IN EFFECT, HE DESIRES TO USE THE NATIONAL PRESSURE GROUP'S NATIONAL PLATFORM

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TO BUTTRESS HIS AIMS FOR BOUGAINVILLE.

HIS PRIMARY TRUMP CARD IS THE THREAT OF SECESSION, A CARD WHICH DIMINISHES IN VALUE AFTER PNG INDEPENDENCE IS A FACT. THE NATIONAL PRESSURE GROUP HAS NOT BEEN ABLE TO SECURE THE POWERS HE DESIRES IN THE CONSTITUTION, AND PNG MAY ENTER INDEPENDENCE WITHOUT THEM BEING DEFINED. HE MUST THEREFORE MOVE NOW. HIS ACTIONS HAVE BEEN OUTRAGEOUS AND HAVE BEEN CALCULATED TO MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE CENTRAL GOVT TO "STONEWALL" HIM. HE HAS STRONG LOCAL SUPPORT. HE HAS RAPIDLY ESCALATED THE ISSUE FROM A DISPUTE OVER THE WORKS PROGRAM (INVOLVING A FEW MILLIONS OF DOLLARS) TO THREATS OF SECESSION: DEMANDED \$150 MILLION FROM PNG TO ESTABLISH HIS OWN GOVERNMENT: TRIED TO EMBARRASS THE SOMARE GOVT WITH OBLIQUE THREATS AGAINST THE MINE, OF INVOLVING THE UNITED NATIONS. BY SO DOING, HE HAS FORCED THE GOVERNMENT TO EXPEND ENORMOUS ENERGY JUST TO GET HIM TO CONSIDER ENTERING INTO NEGOTIATIONS. FROM HIS NARROW POINT OF REFERENCE THE MORE OUTRAGEOUS HIS BEHAVIOR THE BETTER, UP TO THE POINT OF INDUCING THE NATIONAL GOVT TO RESORT TO FORCE. (C) DR. ALEXIS SAREI, A BOUGAINVILLIAN, FORMER CATHOLIC PRIEST MARRIED TO AN AMCIT FORMER NUN, WAS APPOINTED DISTRICT COMMISSIONER BY SOMARE AS A CONCESSION TO BOUGAINVILLIAN SENTIMENT. IN MID 1974 HE WAS ALSO ELECTED CHAIRMAN OF THE BOUGAINVILLE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT. WHILE WEARING BOTH HATS HIS LOYALTY IS WITH BOUGAINVILLE. HE INFORMED ECONOFF THAT HE AND HANNETT HAD AGREED NOT TO POLITICALLY OPPOSE ONE ANOTHER, THAT HANNETT WOULD BECOME PROVINCIAL PREMIER AND USE THE PROVINCIAL GOVT POWER BASE TO INSIST THAT SAREI CONTINUE AS DISTRICT COMMISSIONER AT BOUGAINVILLE. SAREI ENVISIONS HIS ROLE TO BE AS LIAISON WITH THE NATIONAL GOVERNMENT TO PROMOTE BOUGAINVILLE INTERESTS, A ROLE WHICH HANNETT IS TEMPERAMENTALLY UNSUITED TO PLAY.

SAREI WILL THEREFORE RESIST, WITH PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT BACKING, ATTEMPTS BY THE NATIONAL GOVT TO TRANSFER OR REMOVE HIM. HIS CONTINUATION AS BOUGAINVILLE'S DC IS A QUESTION THAT SOMARE GOVT IS CONSIDERING NOW. SINCE SAREI HAS LEFT FOR SIX WEEKS LEAVE IN THE U.S. THE DECISION LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NEED NOT BE MADE IMMEDIATELY.

SAREI IS VIEWED AS A MODERATING FORCE ON LEO HANNETT, BUT WE SUSPECT HE ONLY MODERATES THOSE VIEWS WHICH WILL NOT PROVE FRUITFUL IN THE PROMOTION OF BOUGAINVILLE AIMS. IF HE IS DISMISSED AS DISTRICT COMMISSIONER HE WILL PROBABLY ENTER BOUGAINVILLE POLITICS, AND COULD PERHAPS CHALLENGE MOLA OR LAPUN FOR THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY IN THE NEXT ELECTION.

IN SUMMARY THE BOUGAINVILLE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT HAS MANAGED
TO AGAIN FORCE ITS DEMANDS TO THE TOP OF THE NATIONAL AGENDA,
A VICTORY OF SORTS IN ITSELF. THE SOMARE GOVERNMENT, IF
THE PRESS IS AN ACCURATE INDICATOR, HAS MANAGED TO
COMMENCE NEGOTIATIONS TO NEGOTIATE, BUT IN OUR VIEW
WILL FIND IT DIFFICULT TO HOLD TO A HARD LINE FEARING
THAT THE FISH WILL SLIP OFF THE HOOK. WE EXPECT THE
GOVERNMENT WILL MAKE CONCESSIONS TO THE BPG, WHILE AT
THE SAME TIME FINDING SOME FACE SAVING FORMULA, PROVIDED
HANNETT IS "REASONABLE" WHICH IS TO SAY LESS PUBLICALLY
OUTRAGEOUS THAN USUAL.
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